DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 887 PS 017 531

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TITLE Implementing a Developmental Child-Centered Kindergarten Program Using Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Activities.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 103p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Grade Repetition; *Kindergarten Children; Learning Activities; *Learning Centers (Classroom); *Learning Readiness; Primary Education; *Self Concept; *Student Attitudes; *Student Development; Student Promotion

ABSTRACT

Aware that some kindergarten children are not ready for the demands of a structured program, a kindergarten teacher developed and implemented a program which made use of classroom learning centers to help kindergarten students grow in all areas of development. Special attention was given to the process of helping students: (1) develop belief in themselves and respect for others; (2) establish effective work habits; and (3) strengthen their desire to learn. The learning centers created an environment which stimulated students' learning, permitted social interaction, and contributed to security and self-confidence. Pre- and post-intervention assessments indicated that each student was able to grow emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually as a result of planned experiences with concrete objects and interaction with peers and adults. It was concluded that the learning centers had a strong influence in motivating students to become independent learners. Students were successful in mastering skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum. They worked cooperatively and developed positive attitudes, values, and basic skills through daily exposure to learning center activities. The program is to be continued and expanded in the next school year. Related materials are appended, including student inventories and progress reports, a chart of learning centers, and sample learning center contracts. (RH)

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Implementing A Developmental Child-Centered Kindergarten Program Using Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Activities

by

Addie Bates Wilson

PS 017531

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

Implementing A Developmental Child-Centered Kindergarten Program Using Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Activities

by

Addie Bates Wilson

Cluster XXI

PS 017631

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
In Early and Middle Childhood
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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Approved:

August 24, 1988
Date of Final Approval of Report

Polly Peterson, Ph.D. (signature)
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sincere appreciation is extended to many individuals who have supported and assisted the writer in all stages of this practicum. Special thanks go to friends, students, teachers, educational leaders, and family members.

The writer's deepest appreciation and sincere thanks are extended to Dr. Polly Peterson, who served as adviser, for providing valuable feedback and guidance.

Finally, the writer expresses gratitude to her husband, James, for his encouragement, confidence, patience, and assistance during the completion of this practicum and the entire doctoral program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		vi
ABSTRACT		vii
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	
	Description of Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	5
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	
	Problem Description	7
	Problem Documentation	9
	Causative Analysis	10
	The Related Literature	11
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	
	Statement of General Goals	16
	Behavioral Expectations	17
	Evaluation Instruments	17
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	20
	Description of Selected Solutions	25
	Report of Action Taken	39
V	RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Results	49
	Conclusions	57
	Recommendations	58
	Dissemination	59
REFERENCES		60

Appendices

A	PRE AND POST-SELF-CONCEPT INVENTORY	64
B	PRE AND POST-STANDARDS OF LEARNING	66
C	PRE AND POST-INVENTORY CHECKLIST OF FINE AND GROSS MOTOR SKILLS	68
D	PRE AND POST-INVENTORY SKILLS CHECKLIST	70
E	CLASSROOM DESIGN OF LEARNING CENTERS	73
F	LEARNING CENTER CONTRACTS	75
G	SCHEDULE AND CLASS NEWS	82
H	CALENDAR PLAN	87
I	PROGRESS REPORT	89
J	"CLASSROOM NOTES"	95

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Results of Pre and Post-Self-concept Inventory	50
2	Results of Pre and Post-Standards of Learning Skills Checklist	52
3	Results of Pre and Post-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills	54
4	Results of Pre and Post-Inventory Skills Checklist	55

ABSTRACT

Implementing a Developmental Child-Centered Kindergarten Program Using Cognitive, Affective, and Psychmotor Activities. Wilson, Addie Bates, 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Kindergarten/ Early Childhood Education/Child Centered/Affective/Cognitive/ Psychomotor/Learning Laboratories/Developmental Stages/Child Development

The writer developed and implemented a program which utilized learning centers to help kindergarten students grow in all areas of development: physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. Special attention was given to help them (a) develop belief in themselves and respect for others, (b) establish effective work habits, and (c) strengthen their desire to learn.

The learning centers created an environment which stimulated students' learning, permitted social interaction, and contributed to their feelings of security and self-confidence. As a result of planned experiences with concrete objects and interaction with peers and adults, each student was able to grow emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. The writer administered the Pre and Post-Self-Concept Inventory, Pre and Post-Standards of Learning Inventory, Pre and Post-Inventory of Fine and Gross Motor Skills, and Pre and Post-Inventory Checklist.

Based on the results of the practicum, the writer concluded that learning centers contributed greatly to motivate students to become more independent in the learning process. Students had successful experiences in mastering skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum. They worked cooperatively and developed positive attitudes, values, and basic skills through daily exposure to learning center activities. Ninety percent of the students scored higher on 9 of the 10 items on the Post-Self-Concept Inventory; 100% mastered the standards of learning based on 80% to 100% for assessment mastery; 99% of the students mastered the fine and gross motor skills; and 100% mastered the majority of the skills on the Post-Inventory Checklist. The overall impact of the program was positive, and the concepts will be continued and expanded in the coming year.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

Approximately midway between the two most popular tourist attractions in the writer's coastal state--the sunny sands of the beach and the stately mansions of a restored colonial landmark--is the work setting for this practicum. The city is located on a peninsula which juts into a famous bay. It is the home of the country's first free public school, provided for in the will of Benjamin Syms in 1634 (Introduction to Hampton City Schools, undated). The school division has grown since that time to now include 33 schools: 24 elementary, 5 middle, and 4 high schools. All schools are accredited by the State Department of Education. Enrollment is approximately 20,000 students.

The city's first elementary alternatives, two fundamental schools, emerged in 1978 partially as the result of a nationally recognized thrust and, more particularly, the community's request for a "back-to-basics" movement. With strong parental involvement in the educational process, the major instructional emphasis of this program was on basic academic skills and on basic subject matter. Good work and study habits were stressed in well disciplined learning environments.

Within this school division, each alternative program was tailored to meet specific desires and needs of both students and parents. With near unanimity, the students who enrolled in these

programs did so by application. Each program depended heavily on the separate commitments of students, parents, and teacher; and each relied on close communication and coordination among the active participants and on the understanding and cooperative support of the total school division and the community.

The school in which the practicum took place served a community of about 5,000 people. The setting was an elementary fundamental school, kindergarten to fifth grade, which comprised 470 students and was located in a middle-class neighborhood in the southeastern part of a city comprised of five subdivisions of homes and four subdivisions of apartment complexes. The fundamental program attempted to build within each child a sense of responsibility, confidence, pride in accomplishment, and a positive self-image through academic achievement in a quiet and orderly setting. It was based on the belief that learning takes place best in carefully structured, well disciplined educational surroundings. Instructional emphasis was on reading, language arts, and mathematics. A traditional style of instruction including structure, organization, and discipline was used throughout the school.

There are churches of all denominations and a public library within the community. The Junior League sponsors programs for the school and community. Local newspapers keep the community abreast of what is happening worldwide as well as locally. Television and radio stations provide programs that are both educational and entertaining.

The school is in close proximity to a variety of scientific, historic, and cultural centers. The community creates, supports, and modifies the school program. An atmosphere of history and tradition surrounds the area. Children cannot help but feel a sense of continuity as they live in an area where American history has been made and continues to be made in fields of technology. The past, present, and the future are linked together providing them with a unique opportunity to learn.

The educational range of parents was from low to high. Family incomes ranged from welfare to upper socioeconomic levels. Occupations of parents were extremely varied, e.g., physicians, college professors, city manager, judge, pilot, engineers, designers, librarians, teachers, principals, secretaries, nurses, unskilled workers, and even unemployed.

Parents who sent their children to the fundamental school did so entirely of their own volition. In so doing, the children agreed to learn and to abide by the rules and policies of the school. Failure of the children and/or parents to uphold the fundamental school contract could result in reassignment to their zoned school.

The school was constructed in 1922 to develop children as individuals and to improve the quality of life in the community. The school structure is composed of three floors for grades 1 through 5. A newly built addition to house kindergarten classes was opened in the fall of 1968. The library has been remodeled and is well equipped to handle the needs of the school's

enrollment. There are storage rooms, custodial rooms, and large playground areas where students may participate in a variety of activities. The lunch needs of the school are met by a staffed cafeteria with a manager in charge.

The professional and paraprofessional personnel of the school included a principal, 21 teachers, 4 itinerant teachers, 4 aides, a secretary, nurse, and librarian. The staff believed that a cooperative effort should be made toward creating a wholesome atmosphere which would enhance interpersonal relationships and intellectual growth. They believed that it was their responsibility to work with each child in developing the principles, goals, and communicative skills which would help students achieve a sense of individual worth and responsibility.

Children were drawn into a friendly teacher-pupil relationship of planning, developing, and evaluating varied learning experiences. An attempt was made to gear the total school curriculum to their needs in such a satisfying way that they, through self-direction and teacher guidance, would be challenged to continue purposeful learning. Parents were well informed of the activities of the school through the use of newsletters. Conferences with parents were held at least twice a year to discuss the progress of their children.

A parent teacher association presented six meetings per school year, during which time the association informed members of school policies, projects, and teaching innovations within the school. To provide the school with additional audiovisual aids

and supplementary materials to assist in the instructional program, the parent teacher association sponsored one money-raising project yearly.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer holds an undergraduate degree in special education and a master's degree in guidance and counseling; a postgraduate professional certificate with endorsements in elementary and secondary guidance, special education mentally retarded, and kindergarten.

The writer has taught kindergarten for 17 years, was grade chairperson for 16 years, chairperson of the kindergarten citywide mathematics committee for 2 years, a member of the discipline and faculty participation committees for 8 years, a member of the mathematics textbook adoption committee, career awareness/mathematics/physical education curriculum committees, and the home-school advisory and steering committees. The enrollment of her classes was 24 students in the morning and 21 students in the afternoon. Membership in professional organizations included: Kappa Delta Pi (an honor society in education), Sigma Chapter of Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority, Hampton Reading Association, Hampton Education Association, Virginia Education Association, and National Education Association.

The writer has used a traditional style of instruction including structure, organization, and discipline in her self-contained classroom. Instructional emphasis was on reading,

language arts, and mathematics. Patriotism, brotherhood, dignity, pride, and respect for both self and others were an integral part of the basic curriculum. Current materials and equipment provided for individual differences and varied types of reinforcement. The writer's ultimate goal was to guide all students in the acquisition of skills, information, and attitudes that would be immediately satisfying to them and would help them build good foundations for the years ahead.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In the writer's state, entrance to school is based on children's birthdates even though chronological age is not the best indicator of school readiness. A better indicator is a child's behavioral age--or how a child responds to given tasks and situations. School readiness means being able to handle daily expectations and activities without undue stress.

School law specifies that children are of school age if they reach their fifth birthday on or before September 30 of the calendar year. This law was enacted by the 1985 General Assembly and went into effect in the fall of 1986. The change in school entrance age from 5 by December 31 to 5 by September 30 is being rolled back one month at a time, changing the month of entrance as follows:

1986-87 school year: a child could enter kindergarten if he/she had reached age 5 on or before November 30, 1986;

1987-88 school year: a child could enter kindergarten if he/she had reached age 5 on or before October 31, 1987;

1988-89 school year: a child can enter kindergarten if he/she reaches age 5 on or before September 30, 1988.

Parents or guardians of children who reach 5 years of age after these dates but on or before December 31 of the school year

can petition the school division to enroll the children in kindergarten. For the 1987-88 school year, children entered kindergarten if they reached age 5 on or before October 31. The half-day kindergarten classes met 180 days during the school year. The children attended either the morning or afternoon session.

Many aspects of the school's programs were planned in terms of similarities of children at different ages or stages of development. Children shared a need for physical well being, acceptance, success, recognition, being needed, wanted, and appreciated. Although it was generally agreed that children are alike in many ways, there is evidence that individuals differ in ways that are educationally significant. These factors influenced the way children feel about themselves, their attitude toward learning, knowledge, and skills acquired.

As kindergarten students began school, they were confronted with a new set of tasks to master. Academic emphasis was placed on the kindergarten curriculum; and it was necessary for students to be ready to cope with the mental, psychological, and social demands of the academic world.

Some of the writer's kindergarten students were frustrated with the structured curriculum which focused on specific skills to be learned. Academic achievement led to an increased emphasis on the basic skills. At ages 4 and 5, some children were ready for school but not for the demands of a structured kindergarten

program. As a result, some of the children experienced failure on a daily basis as well as at the end of the year.

The curriculum focused on specific structured skills to be mastered. Greatest emphasis was placed on academic achievement as established by academic performance criteria and expectations. The problem was that SOME CHILDREN WERE NOT READY FOR THE DEMANDS OF A STRUCTURED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM.

Problem Documentation

The problem was documented by cumulative records (retentions), comments, observations of classroom performance, and basic screening assessments (teacher and citywide-constructed). The assessments included concepts in areas such as language development, fine/gross motor skills, number skills, body awareness, auditory and visual discrimination, etc.

During the 1986-87 school year, 12% of kindergarten students in the writer's school were retained in kindergarten for the next year. The decision to have these students repeat kindergarten was based on academic achievement, attitude, and physical and maturational attributes. Academic expectations were delineated in the areas of language arts/reading and mathematics. Successful achievement in science, health, and social science was determined by overall grade level performance.

Some of the teachers' comments concerning the retained kindergarten students were as follows:

1. work of grade too difficult;

2. shy, withdrawn, does not participate;

3. shows signs of immaturity for grade.

Ten percent of the students who were promoted to first grade met only minimum promotion requirements.

Causative Analysis

In the writer's school, causes for kindergarten students not being promoted to first grade were: (a) some children's developmental ages were not consistent with their chronological ages; (b) children developed at different rates; (c) some children were not ready for a structured kindergarten program; and (d) worksheets resulted in a pencil-and-paper curriculum.

In recent years, a number of conflicting societal pressures and attitudes caused changes in the focus of the kindergarten program. The program had to be based on the needs and abilities of children in the classroom. Many teachers and administrators required mastery of content that was formerly expected in later primary grades.

Research confirmed that the course of the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development of young children has not changed (Ames & Ames, 1981). Only the variety and intensity of early experiences has changed. Young children need supportive environments, rich in direct experiences that are meaningful to them (Nebraska, 1984).

The Related Literature

Most researchers agree that chronological age may not be the best determiner of when children should begin their formal education. Halman (1984) stated, from the point of view of the child's developmental needs, that the most important dynamics of life are emotional and social. Cognitive life is secondary, based upon and generated from the child's affective and interpersonal experiences. By emphasizing cognition in early childhood education, an accurate picture of children is not presented.

Elkind (1986) cautions that the risks of miseducating children were both short and long term. In each case, the potential psychological risks of early intervention far outweighed any potential educational gains. He pointed out that pushing children into academic areas too soon had a negative effect on learning.

Glickman (1979) argued that the way to raise achievement scores is to let children play. If children are to learn to read, write, spell, and compute with proficiency, then the answer is not to give them more basal readers and traditional instruction--the answer is to provide them with time and the opportunities to play.

Campbell (1984) stated that demanding performance of kindergarten students created too much stress for them and could have damaging consequences. Ames and Ilg (1979) expressed the belief that birthday or chronological age is no guarantee of

readiness for school. They concluded that the child's behavioral age, not his/her birthday age, should determine the time of school entrance and of subsequent promotion.

In presenting the pros and cons of required preschool for all children, Soderman (1984) noted the "cognitive sifting down of the curriculum over the past years." She observed that: "Children at 4 and 5 . . . have a genuine need to play, and the quality and quantity of the time they spend playing are later seen in their creative thought, ability to make decisions, and potential for coping with stressful situations" (p. 19).

Bennie (1977) stated that:

> A variety of trends, developments, and research in education, psychology, and sociology have set the stage for the emergence of learning centers. Some of these trends began as far back as the 1700s, although the most significant developments occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The historical perspective reveals that learning centers may never have developed without the necessary advancements in technology, the development of educational media and programmed instruction, the acceptance of certain views about the individual and individual differences, and the enactment of key federal aid-to-education legislation such as the National Defense Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The influence of Piaget's theories, as reflected in concepts of open education and process education, have also had a

> profound influence upon the development of learning centers. Other important developments have included Allport's first conceptualization of learning style, the development of the "educational sciences," and Maslow's formulation of a needs hierarchy and focus upon the individual's quest for self-actualization. (p. 18)

Uphoff and Gilmore (1985) presented several possible ways to reduce the magnitude of the "unready" child's problem:

> First, states can change the cutoff date for school entrance. A second possible action is for schools to use a well designed pupil developmental assessment process to determine children's readiness to enter kindergarten or to be promoted to first grade. Third, parents could hold their "too young" children for another year before entering them in school. Fourth, schools could "kick the curriculum back upstairs where it used to be. Fifth, assign developmental unready children to a special kindergarten, pre-first grade, junior-first grade, or similar program that offers five years of primary education instead of the more usual for (K-3) years. (pp. 89-90)

Positive self-concept, according to Mills (1984), was one of the factors associated with success in academic performance. Children must have satisfactory and enriching experiences to feel good about themselves and have confidence in their abilities. The conclusion of most theories was that self-concept is learned and develops as children interact with their environments. When

children feel confident in themselves, they will feel ready to move into new experiences and expect to succeed in them. It was expected that if children have positive self-concepts, they will be more ready for the demands of the academic world. The association of positive self-concept with academic achievement was found to be true in mathematics (Kremer & Walberg, 1981).

Teacher influence on student self-concept is very important. Simpson (1978), in a summary of research, concluded that the teacher was one of the most important contributors to student achievement and attitudes. Students' self-concept is an important consideration because it is related to academic achievement.

Chandler (1985) reported that much disservice has been done to students in the name of developing and encouraging positive self-concepts without recognizing some of the limitations to this approach. The first shortcoming related to the difficulty in measuring self-concept. A second shortcoming related to the self-enhancement model. Third, there was no reason to assume that self-concept and academic performance are even correlated. Fourth, there was considerable danger for individuals and society if one sought to develop a positive self-concept in students without also developing specific performance skills. Fifth, if children felt extremely positive about themselves, they might perceive that there was less room for growth than if they felt negatively. Sixth, if one concluded that success was the only legitimate cause of giving reward, effort would go unrewarded.

Seventh, there was the shortcoming that attempted to alter feelings, thoughts, or emotions.

The self-concept literature supported the following conclusions:

1. One of the factors associated with success in academic performance is a positive self-concept (Mills, 1984).

2. The teacher is one of the most important contributors to student achievement and attitudes (Simpson, 1978).

3. Much disservice has been done to students in the name of developing and encouraging positive self-concepts without recognizing some of the limitations to this approach (Chandler, 1985).

4. The association of positive self-concepts with academic achievement has been found to be true in mathematics (Kremer & Walberg, 1981).

The literature also supports child-centered activities as being an effective method to help children grow in all areas of development, i.e., physical, emotional, social, and intellectual.

The writer concluded that it is essential for children to have satisfactory and enriching experiences to feel good about themselves and have confidence in their abilities. If children feel confident about themselves, they will feel ready to venture into new experiences and expect to succeed in them. It seemed reasonable, therefore, to expect that if children have positive self-concepts, they will be more ready for the demands of the academic world.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

Kindergarten is an important part of the total school program. In the writer's school, general goals of kindergarten are the same as other grades; namely, children will grow in all areas of development: physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. When children are learning skills in the content areas, special attention will be given to help them: (a) develop belief in themselves and respect for others, (b) establish effective work habits, and (c) strengthen their desire to learn. These attitudes and habits are the foundation for a successful school experience.

The kindergarten curriculum included all content areas taught in the elementary school. It was presented not as isolated subjects but as experiences that developed concepts, fostered skills, and laid the foundation for future learning. As a result of planned experiences with concrete objects and interaction with peers and adults, each child maintained positive feelings or improved negative feelings they had toward school and learning. Students would also have successful experiences in mastering skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum.

The following standards of performance were projected for this practicum:

1. each child will express thoughts and feelings, share and take turns, exhibit a strong desire to learn, and participate in class activities;

2. each child will participate in dramatic play, talk and listen to peers and adults, retell stories, dictate original stories and poems, and follow simple oral directions;

3. each child will demonstrate development of muscular control and coordination and participate in a balanced program of physical activities and relaxation;

4. children will sing simple songs and experiment with paints, crayons, clay, and other art media. They will tell about personal art experiences;

5. children will master the skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum.

Behavioral Expectations

The following behavioral expectations were projected for this practicum:

1. each child will grow emotionally and socially;
2. each child will grow in his/her ability to communicate;
3. each child will grow physically;
4. each child will grow aesthetically;
5. each child will grow intellectually.

Evaluation Instruments

The following assessment instruments were used to measure the standards of performance:

1. The Pre and Post-Self-Concept Inventory (consisting of 10 items) was used (see Appendix A). The children were questioned individually for their responses.

2. The Pre and Post-Standards of Learning (SOL) Skills Checklist was used (see Appendix B). It included three modes of assessment with minor variations:

a. performance (oral or dramatic presentations), oral interpretation, and role playing which entailed set criteria for achievement (for example, mastery of skills indicated that children were on or above criteria);

b. observation activities such as group interaction and conversation assessed over an extended period and without making students self-conscious of assessment;

c. oral responses that required children to answer in phrases or sentences.

3. The Pre and Post-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills was used (see Appendix C). Student performance and the writer's observations were the basis of the screening.

4. The Pre and Post-Inventory Skills Checklist was used (see Appendix D). Student performance and the writer's observations were the basis of the screening.

5. The pre and post-SOL tests of reading (Reading Standards of Learning, 1985), language arts (Language Arts Standards of Learning, 1985), and mathematics (Draft for Mathematics Standards of Learning, 1987) were used.

After a review of the self-concept literature, the writer selected the Self-Concept Inventory because this measure seemed most appropriate for assessment of students' attitudes toward school and learning. The Standards of Learning Skills Checklist and Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills also were criteria used in the evaluation of students.

A class journal was used to record unexpected events, observations, and parents' responses. Meaningful things that happened in the classroom were recorded in the class journal concerning visitors, field trips, and special events.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

In reviewing the literature, the writer found several strategies that were recommended for use in developing a child-centered kindergarten program such as:

Hendricks (1979) stated that centering activities were being used before tests to enhance performance, after recess to get students focused again, and in dozens of creative ways that gifted teachers thought of on a daily basis. These activities helped children to discover the wonders of themselves, to feel good about themselves, and to be able to express who they are in the most creative ways possible.

Gottfried (1983) pointed out that as children solved problems, they made decisions and evaluated their effectiveness individually and with others. Problem-solving situations promoted initiative, cooperation, independence, and curiosity. Children's sense of competence was enhanced by challenging tasks and a responsive environment.

According to Ballenger (1983), experimenting, exploring, discovering, trying out, restructuring, speaking, and listening were all descriptors of good kindergarten programs. Such programs were built on the developmental process of 4 and 5-year-olds; they were based on a state of being--not on a state of becoming.

Bruner (1972) summarized the value of play in learning as follows:

> Play appears to serve several centrally important functions. First, it is a means of minimizing the consequences of one's actions and of learning. Second, play provides an excellent opportunity to try combinations of behavior that would, under functional pressure, never be tried. (p. 701)

Henniger (1987) contended that play encourages curiosity at all levels of development. "Play is hands-on activity where children are learning by doing. Children in the play experiences are not passive observers, but rather actively engaged in moving, manipulating, and exploring things in their world" (p. 170).

Vartuli and Rogers (1985) emphasized that play activities are highly motivating to children.

> When activities are fun, when choices are allowed, and when children feel successful, they are most likely to stay at given tasks. All activities at learning centers have a play quality about them. This is the best way to encourage children to learn and to keep interest high. (p. 9)

The primary source of development in the early years is play, according to Vygotsky (1976). Play is a basic ingredient in learning in kindergarten (Simmons, 1983). Almy (1984) reported that:

> teachers who, drawing on recent research and their own classroom research, justify an important place for play in

> the early childhood curriculum will not lose sight of their responsibility as instructors . . . Teachers have responsibility . . . for providing the play opportunities in which children can consolidate and make personally meaningful the experiences they had. (p. 22)

Some experts had misconceptions about the goals of the kindergarten program which caused them to focus on cursory academic skills like counting and reciting the alphabet (Simmons & Brewer, 1985). Ross (1976) reported that "research has indicated no significant differences (in achievement scores) in programs using reading readiness workbooks and programs using normal kindergarten play activities" (p. 94). Learning to learn should be emphasized in the early years, according to Bloom (1981), rather than using precious years for an early start on academics.

A number of discussions and evaluations showed that children's self-concept and school achievement were related. Roberson, Lewandowski, Potts, Bowie, Mitchell, Bauer, and Bowman (1982) reported that students could feel good about school when they felt good about themselves. Self-esteem was an important part of success, and a student who grew in confidence and pride was building a basis for achievement. Ways which were found to be helpful in building students' self-esteem were: (a) recognize and build on every student's strengths; (b) build some trust, build a human relationship; (c) deal with a child as one person to another and self-esteem will grow; (d) be honest with

students; (e) talk with students, not at them; and (f) use a sense of humor for easing tensions, frustration, and anger, as well as for enjoyment.

Raschke and Wedman (1984) emphasized ways parents and teachers can develop an environment conducive to the development of self-esteem in their children by providing activities and experiences that result in feelings of success. Stienkemeyer (1984) presented ideas to help parents and teachers create a positive environment for children through planned activities and responses that say, "You're okay." Winfield (1984) observed that books help children to develop a positive self-image and feelings of self-confidence.

Lepper and Greene (1978) emphasized that the use of rewards to encourage learning seem to produce negative results, especially related to motivation. Boggiano and Ruble (1979) reported that children who receive praise for excellent performance demonstrate interest in the activity. Brophy (1981) stated that effects of praise depend upon the meaning attributed by the receiver of the reward. According to Borbe (1985), in order to improve students' self-images, assemblies should be made more personal and students should be encouraged to care about others and to care about their school.

According to Charlesworth and Miller (1985), paper-and-pencil tasks are used to teach basic skills which could be taught through more appropriate, concrete activities and real experiences. Children can acquire basic skills through social

studies content using the traditional early childhood learning center environment organization. Ames and Ames (1981) reported that research confirms that the course of the social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children has not changed.

Williams and Kamii (1986) noted that "most early childhood educators are well aware that young children learn better with hands-on activities than with worksheets, but they have trouble explaining exactly what children learn and how by manipulating objects" (p. 23). Black (1981) reported that children are more likely to demonstrate their competence when questions probe their practical knowledge. Questions, therefore, need to be directly related to children's activities.

According to Duckworth (1979), a good learning situation "must permit the child to establish plans to reach a distant goal while leaving him wide freedom to follow his own routing" (p. 306). Hill (1987) reported that the "curricula should be based on the right of the child to learn healthy habits of food, sleep, rest, open-air play and work, emotional sanity, and social poise" (p. 13).

Myers and Maurer (1987) reported that:

> Learning centers may be described as self-directing/self-correcting; self-directing/open-ended; or teacher instructory/exploratory. The first type allows teachers to set up activities for a prescribed purpose. The latter two types allow teachers to set up activities for children of

varying ages, learning abilities, and experience levels and allow the child to determine the outcome. (p. 23)

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer developed and implemented learning centers for the classroom as an integral part of the daily instructional kindergarten program. Some of the activities and ideas from the literature which allowed the classroom to be child-centered rather than teacher-centered were used. The centers allowed the students to work independently on activities to meet their needs and interests and to evaluate their own progress. The purpose of the learning centers was to introduce, develop, explore, and/or reinforce a concept or to facilitate development of skills.

Learning centers contributed greatly to motivating students to become more independent in the learning process. They presented a wide variety of materials that were used to investigate a given topic or concept at various levels. Learning centers enhanced children's learning by helping them to feel like worthwhile individuals who could do things on their own.

The physical arrangement of the learning environment consisted of a variety of learning centers which contained a wide and varied assortment of materials (commercial and teacher-made) that were both self-corrective and open-ended. The activities in each center included those appropriate to the particular area and were not intended to be inclusive of all activities found in each center. The writer continued to use basic textbooks and other

resource materials as part of the total program. The learning center activities emphasized psychomotor, cognitive, and affective learning through many sensory and concrete materials. These centers were changed, expanded, and contracted (see Appendix E) in order to provide for students' continuous growth.

The Learning Center Contracts (see Appendix F) provided the students with many opportunities to learn independently. The students worked at their own pace; and their interest, attention span, and achievement was monitored.

The writer provided a child-centered environment that invited independent and group learning through exploration and investigation. It was carefully planned with varied and challenging materials so that each child was able to create and discover the many joys that learning has to offer.

It is the writer's viewpoint that individualized instruction is the best method for meeting the needs of children and that learning centers allow the classroom to be child-centered. The Learning Center Contracts enabled the writer to individualize and increase students' learning proficiency.

Approximately 52 students experienced a planned, child-centered environment that encouraged learning through exploration and discovery. Students had access to multilevel experiences and activities of varying degrees of complexity. Attention was given to the development of positive attitudes and habits, as well as to the acquisition of specific skills.

There were opportunities during the course of the kindergarten day for students to work alone, in small groups, and with the entire group. A typical day began with the work period. This was a time when students explored, manipulated, created, and discovered. It included time to select an activity, carry it through to a satisfying conclusion, and clean up. The writer greeted the students when they arrived, established rapport, and encouraged them to select an activity or work experience from the available materials in the centers that interested them (see Appendix G).

The writer's guidance was based on observation. Some students were busy in the housekeeping corner while others worked at block building. Two or three used large blocks to construct a fire engine, barn, bus, airplane, or store. Some students painted at easels, while others engaged in pouring or measuring water, listening to records, or weighing beans or sand. Special activities such as cooking or planting seeds were planned for small groups.

During work time, the writer circulated among groups and encouraged and assisted students when necessary. As opportunities arose, the writer helped individuals and small groups to plan and evaluate their activities.

The students were encouraged to extend their activities beyond one day, thereby learning to build on past experiences and to plan for future learning. At times, the writer did direct

teaching with one or two students in order to help them acquire needed skills.

The total group came together for short periods of time for stories and music activities and for sharing of experiences, films or filmstrips, and evaluation. Through verbalization, conversation, dramatic play, and listening activities in these periods, students had opportunities to:

1. build meaningful vocabularies;
2. clarify thoughts through oral expression;
3. develop oral-language habits of correct grammar;
4. learn to present and listen to ideas;
5. appreciate importance of spoken and written words;
6. share experiences;
7. appreciate literature.

The writer recognized each child's ability and experiences and assisted him or her in finding satisfaction in larger group activity. Time was provided for students to assess progress in activities. Daily evaluation in which the writer and students examined purposes, plans, activities, problems, and progress provided direction for further learning activities.

Organization of the kindergarten day was kept flexible; but, at the same time, students were provided with the security of knowing what would come next. They read their schedules through pictures. They chose which center they wanted to work in by coloring in the box by the picture (see Appendix F). Specific tasks were written in by the writer.

During center time, students worked alone or in small groups on their assigned or free choice activities. Many of the tasks at a center were self-checking. During the students' conferences with the writer, their work was discussed.

In selecting the solution strategy that was used, the writer developed the following learning centers to help individualize instruction:

Reading Readiness and Mathematics Center

Materials chosen to stimulate thinking and promote manipulative skills were made available to students as activities and learnings called for them. An assortment of toys, games, and puzzles were placed on open shelves within easy reach. Students' growth in perceptual skills, eye-hand coordination, reading readiness, and mathematical concepts was furthered as they handled and manipulated objects of various sizes, shapes, colors, textures, and numbers. Some of the materials that were used (Division of Elementary Education, 1975) are as follows:

1. pegboard and pegs
2. puzzles (wooden and heavy cardboard) of varying degrees of difficulty
3. games (large dominoes, picture and symbol matching, and alphabet)
4. toys (wooden and plastic)
5. interlocking train
6. counting frame
7. colored rods

8. letter and number symbols (wood, plastic, cardboard, and felt
9. beads (wooden and plastic)
10. counters
11. shoe laces
12. snap beads
13. puppets
14. clock
15. parquetry blocks
16. design cubes, color cones, and form boards
17. measuring tools
18. calendar

Science Center

A special area was provided with table, shelves, and cabinet for housing materials related to science learnings. This science center was a place for observation, exploration, and discovery. Here students could observe a fish, a turtle, etc. The center provided a place for students to care for living things. From time to time, objects and specimens which students collected were displayed in the center. Selected and displayed picture books encouraged the students to pursue their interests and aid in their search for knowledge. As the students examined, took apart and put together, and determined uses for materials, they began to make generalizations that led to greater understanding. These investigations laid the foundations for the development of the

scientific attitude and method. SJome of the materials that were used are as follows:

1. large aquarium
2. terrarium
3. science picture books
4. magnifying glass
5. magnets
6. compasses
7. thermometers (large outdoor and indoor)
8. scales
9. mirror
10. measuring spoons
11. other measuring, straining, and pouring devices
12. seeds and bulbs
13. flower boxes and pots
14. shells

Library Center

Many happy experiences with books helped the students grow into reading. They became aware that printed words have meaning, and they learned to interpret and tell stories through pictures.

A book display rack, library table, and chairs were located in a quiet area of the room. Picture books were chosen to appeal to children's interests, were attractively displayed, and changed frequently. Listening devices and collections of tapes and records made it possible for small groups to enjoy recordings of

favorite stories and poems. Some of the materials that were used are as follows:

1. story and picture books
2. poems
3. nursery rhymes
4. flannel board and supplies
5. access to:
   tape recorder
   record player
   recordings of stories, poems, and songs
   film loops and projector
   listening posts
   puppets

Sand and Water Play

As students worked with sand and water, there were many possibilities for mathematics in measuring and filling, for language and communication in their dramatic play, and for science as they experimented with the qualities of their materials. Students simply enjoyed the sensorial experiences provided by sand and water; others learned about letters by drawing in the sand; and still others learned how cities are built by construction in the sand.

Block Center

Over a period of several months, opportunities were provided for students to experience building with blocks by adding to,

replacing, and finally using the structure, thus helping them to develop a concept of time and its use. Building with blocks gave the children firsthand experiences in organizing, arranging, measuring, counting, and problem solving. They learned to express their ideas by building with blocks and frequently dramatized their own experiences while building. When students handled the blocks, they engaged in physical activity which promoted muscular coordination and gross motor development. Some of the materials that were used are as follows:

1. set of solid, hardwood building blocks (straight, circular, and arched)
2. set of hollow blocks
3. set of large building blocks
4. small accessories to enrich block play (cars, trucks, planes, trains, boats, wheels, model animal and human figures, cubes and spools, and alphabet letters and numbers)

Art Center

Art activities that involved color and form provided means for students to express ideas, impressions, and feelings that they could not put into words. Painting offered opportunities for free movement and experimentation with colors and designs. The writer helped promote art expression by providing varied experiences and materials. Students painted at easels or on protected floor space. Finger painting was done directly on tables. Materials were arranged so that the students used and

cared for the center as independently as possible. Some of the materials that were used are as follows:

1. double easels
2. brushes
3. paints (powdered tempera and finger paints)
4. paper (newsprint, finger paint paper, colored construction, manila, and tissue)
5. paste
6. blunt scissors
7. large crayons
8. colored chalk
9. clay
10. newspapers
11. rulers, large blunt needles, and thread
12. large pencils
13. pipe cleaners
14. collage materials
15. scrap materials

Housekeeping Center

Creative play in the housekeeping center encouraged communicative skills and provided opportunities for students to work out concerns. Students expressed their thoughts and feelings as they relived familiar experiences with others their own age. Some of the materials that were used are as follows:

1. a variety of unbreakable and washable dolls
2. dress-up clothing and clothes rack
3. doll clothing and chest of drawers
4. doll bed
5. full-length mirror
6. tea table and chairs
7. open cabinet and sets of unbreakable dishes
8. knives, forks, and spoons
9. child's rocking chair
10. pots, pans, and other cooking utensils
11. sink, stove, and refrigerator
12. brooms, mops, and dustpan
13. play money and cash register
14. doctor's and nurse's kits
15. telephone

Music Center

The writer provided students with opportunities for free expression as well as planned experiences in listening and use of instruments. The students had opportunities to participate in individual and small group listening and in self-selected and independent activities. They explored tones by tapping on bells or other instruments. The music center included a record player as well as appropriate recordings, music books, and musical instruments. Some of the materials that were used are as follows:

1. rhythm band instruments: cymbals, drums, bells, maracas, rhythm sticks, sand blocks, and triangles

2. records: stories with musical accompaniments, short jingle songs, selections for appreciation, and rhythmic records

3. listening posts

Social Science

The social science center was designed to help students become aware of the world around them and to develop skills of living with others. These activities helped them feel special and capable and gave them a sense of belonging.

The learning centers helped students acquire a more positive attitude toward school and provided successful experiences in mastering skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum.

1. Thirty-five self-esteem activities from Borba and Borba (1978) were used. These activities helped students maintain positive feelings or improve negative feelings they had toward school and learning.

2. Five filmstrips (Anskin, Powers, Platow, & Halperin, 1972) were shown. These filmstrips helped students maintain positive feelings or improve negative feelings they had toward themselves and others. The filmstrips are:

a. Different Shapes

b. First Step

c. I'm the Boss

d. I'm New Here

e. Borrowed Friendship

3. A tape recorder was set up in the activity center. Whenever children wanted to say a few friendly words about a classmate, they were encouraged to go to the center and record the message. This activity helped boost the children's self-esteem by sharing with them the taped compliments of classmates.

4. Various fingerplays and poems about self-esteem were emphasized to help students develop positive feelings.

5. The children made "What-I-Can-Do Books" that emphasized what they could already do. This helped strengthen their sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

6. Hands-on activities helped students participate in the school learning process with positive feelings about themselves, others, and learning:

a. Fingerprints: Children's uniqueness was confirmed by having them take their own fingerprints.

b. "Me" paper dolls: Students made and dislayed doll replicas of themselves.

c. Ring puppets: Students cut out circles the size of a quarter and drew a face in each circle. They pasted a face onto each ring, slipped the ring on their fingers, and then role played or fantasized.

7. The importance of significant others (tour of the school): Students took an extended walk within the school buildings; they toured upper-grade rooms to start them thinking about the future.

8. School-enhancing activity: Students selected a staff member of the week and interviewed that person about his/her job.

9. Library Center: Picture books and story cards were available for students' use in helping them develop a positive self-image and feeling of self-confidence.

10. Awards were used to announce success and to stimulate feelings of worth and self-esteem.

11. Conferences helped to keep parents informed of their children's academic progress and provided information concerning the learning centers and self-esteem activities which the writer was implementing.

12. Activities in self-esteem: Self-esteem: A classroom affair, 101 ways to help children like themselves (Borba & Borba, 1978) was used with the students. In most cases, a short explanation preceded the chart, puppet outline, letter, or award. The activities provided ways to make the classroom an environment that allowed for, stimulated, and fostered the growth of positive self-image. Role playing required children to think of and to act out a solution to a problem situation. These activities helped to build within each child a sense of responsibility, confidence, pride in accomplishment, and a positive self-image.

13. Career Awareness Centers: These centers helped to increase students' awareness of self and others. Activities introduced the students to a variety of occupations and work. The students also toured area businesses where they saw hospital workers, cashiers, painters, clerk-typists, file clerks,

pharmacists, telephone operators, and secretaries on the job. Parents visited the classroom and discussed their various jobs including aerobics instructor, city planner, designer, doctor, engineer, mother, salesperson, Spanish teacher, firefighter, military personnel, pianist, and tow truck driver (see Appendix G).

The calendar plan under which the writer implemented this practicum appears in Appendix H.

Report of Action Taken

The "fundamental" educational philosophy of the writer's school district was based on A Passport to the Fundamental School (Hampton City Schools, 1986) which stated that:

> The Fundamental School is designed to provide basic constructive learning in a highly structured environment. It is a place where selected and planned experiences are carefully prepared and cooperatively undertaken by administrators, parents, teachers, students and the community.
>
> . . . (Parents) sign a contract agreeing to abide by the rules and policies of the school. Parent participation in and endorsement of the fundamental program are vital and necessary elements for student success.
>
> If it is found that the program does not meet the needs of the child, the school or the parents can terminate the contract.
>
> Some of the principles that parents must accept as policy or procedure are:
>
> 1. Classes are self-contained with heterogenous grouping.
> 2. Homework is assigned in each academic subject at every grade level. Homework is assigned in one or more subjects at least three times per week.

3. The school division's current program of reporting student progress is used in the fundamental school. It consists of interim reports, report cards, parent/ teacher conferences, and skill mastery reports. A minimum of two conferences are required per school year.

4. The school division's current promotion policy is used in the fundamental school. Students who must repeat a grade will receive as much additional help as possible in areas of basic skills instruction and pupil counseling. Continued academic failure is an indication that a student is not benefiting from the structure of the fundamental school. Consideration should then be given to other possible learning settings.

5. Parents or guardians must agree to meet with the teacher whenever necessary and at convenient times to discuss the progress of their child.

6. Discipline is maintained by the school staff through implementation of discipline plans developed by the school division and the individual schools. The teacher enforces the plans and is supported by the school administration and parents.

7. The services of a reading teacher are utilized in classes of remediation and as a resource to classroom teachers.

8. Children with special learning problems will be screened and placed appropriately in a division program to meet their needs.

9. Socially acceptable moral standards and values, respect and courtesy will be emphasized at all grade levels.

10. A dress code consistent with the division's code is in effect.

11. Parents will be informed at all times of infractions of rules incurred by their child. If the violations are frequent or serious, the child will be subject to the standard guidelines of the district.

12. There will be mandatory parental and student adherence to the fundamental school contract. If adherence to the contract is not followed, students will be removed from the program. (pp. 3-4)

In spite of this "fundamental" philosophy, the writer recognized the uniqueness of individual students and was granted permission to implement an 8-month program suited to the maturity, experiences, and abilities of each of her kindergarten students. Learning centers (see Appendix F) were created which stimulated students' learning, permitted social interaction, and contributed to their feelings of security and self-confidence. Students were guided to meet new situations and were helped to gain meaning from each experience.

The kindergarten program was planned in terms of realistic objectives which were based on knowledge of how learning takes place and on information about each child. Through the administration of the Pre-Self-Concept Inventory (see Appendix A), Pre-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills (see Appendix C), and Pre-Inventory Skills Checklist (see Appendix D), the writer gained insight into students' prior experiences and knowledge.

Before the school year began, the writer conducted a preliminary meeting with the principal of the school; she later met with her coworker. During kindergarten orientation and Back to School Night, she informed parents of the program.

When school began, only commercially manufactured materials were used in the learning centers. They were used to encourage students to work independently and to enable the writer to make selections of commercial materials that were appropriate for each

child. The writer constructed the following additional games and activities for the various learning centers:

1. alphabet blocks (made from wood scraps)
2. lotto games: initial consonant sounds
3. classification games: foods/animals
4. sequence cards: animals/people
5. rhyming puzzles
6. A-B-C dog: capital/lower case letters
7. alphabet puzzles
8. footprints: left feet had upper case alphabet letters; right feet had lower case letters
9. alphabet worm
10. color charts
11. days-of-the-week chart
12. monthly calendars (January-December)
13. number cards (0-10)
14. number birthday hats (0-10)
15. number chart (0-50)
16. number chart (51-100)
17. color puzzles (blue, brown, black, yellow, green, purple, white, red, green)
18. umbrella counters (0-11)
19. umbrella counters (12-20)
20. color cards
21. numeral pies (0-10)
22. numeral ice cream cones (0-10)

23. numeral apple trees (0-10)
24. numeral fish (0-10)
25. days-of-the-week cards
26. months-of-the-year cards
27. seasons-of-the-year cards
28. number word cards
29. ordinal number cards
30. left-right mittens

The students had first-hand experiences in developing readiness for symbolic learnings. Adequate space, appropriate equipment, and a variety of sensory and concrete materials made it possible for the writer to provide a setting and program conducive to learning. The learning center activities where students were free to explore individual interests provided meaningful opportunities for mastery of the school division's instructional expectations.

Some learning centers were designed to provide starting ideas for exploring a particular topic; others provided direct help for mastery of skills. Other centers provided a focus for independent study of a subject or study in a general area. The materials needed were available at the center or nearby. Each center had a different appearance, but there were basic activities contained in each center. The name of the center indicated its contents.

The activities at different levels which emphasized psychomotor, cognitive, and affective learning through many sensory and concrete materials were changed, expanded, and contracted as necessary (see Appendix E). Parent volunteers frequently changed the centers, but only one or two at a time. Learning centers consisted of a group of tasks arranged in a hierarchical order leading to the acquisition of ability or the understanding of a concept. Directions were clear and presented one step at a time. Symbols or pictures were also used. Generally, instead of the writer assigning students to centers, they chose their own.

The writer observed that students developed a feeling for and an appreciation of friendship, and they also developed respect for the feelings, opinions, and rights of others. There was a degree of seriousness and responsibility in what they were doing and in following through on an activity. Students made decisions and choices and worked individually or in groups. They grew emotionally and demonstrated growth by expressing thoughts and feelings. They developed a feeling of security and became more self-directed; they sought new experiences, increased confidence in themselves, and exhibited a desire to learn. The Post-Self-Concept Inventory (see Appendix A) was administered after the implementation period with positive results.

The learning centers in reading readiness, mathematics, and language arts were designed to contribute directly to the school division's instructional expectations for kindergarten students.

At the learning centers, the students used manipulative games and materials to identify the number of objects in a set from 0 to 10. They used various materails, e.g., finger paints, to trace out those numbers. The numbers were then matched with the number of objects in a set. The students traced and identified squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles. They handled physical objects to get the feel of numbers, to show comparisons (this pile has more teddy bears than that one), to add by moving objects together, and to subtract by removing them. Given a sequence of events, students were able to give ordinal positions 1st through 10th. Students handled physical objects such as thermometers, scales, and clocks and worked with coins in counting.

The students participated in activities that stimulated language growth: language games; dramatic play; listening to stories and music; and reciting nursery rhymes, poetry, and songs. Students participated in language readiness activities such as learning the alphabet, dictating stories, and explaining the action portrayed in a series of pictures. They also did a variety of activities such as pasting and cutting to develop the beginning motor skills essential for manipulating writing tools. In addition to the important oral language development that was basic to the kindergarten program, the students were introduced to letter names and sounds. They worked in the learning center on such reading readiness activities as visual perception,

auditory discrimination, left-to-right progression, classifying, matching, sequencing, and following directions.

Index cards were used for recording activities, work completed, difficulties, general comments, and conferences. Instructional expectations for kindergarten students were recorded on the Standards of Learning Skills Checklist (see Appendix B).

Art played an important role in the development of and was a vital part of the total curriculum. Students creatively communicated their thoughts, ideas, and actions.

Science was highly process oriented--students learned to observe and classify familiar objects from their immediate environment. They learned the properties of living and nonliving things. Much effort was placed on giving them a positive feeling about themselves through science activities and instilling readiness to learn. Students also planted seeds for their gardens.

The library center was an inviting place for students to browse. The writer used library books that covered a wide range of abilities and interests. Work games and other audiovisual materials were available for individual or group work.

The block center offered students a wide range of learning experiences. They used small accessories to enrich block play, e.g., cars, alphabets, and numbers.

The social science center was based on the background and experiences of the students. Field trips, visits from community

workers and leaders, role playing, and stories were used in this center. Fifth-grade students and several from a local high school presented primary stories to the kindergarten students.

The housekeeping center provided students with the opportunity to dress up in both boy's and girl's clothes. They acted out feelings and emotions; opportunities were also provided for them to cook.

Students enjoyed playing in sand and water. They drew letters and numerals in the sand and experimented with a variety of materials.

All of the centers allowed students to share in certain basic experiences. The range of students' abilities, interests, and achievement usually was utilized by small group instruction, learning center approach, and independent activities. The self-concept activities helped students accept themselves as they were and encouraged them to participate in school with positive feelings about themselves and about the tasks.

The set of open-ended filmstrips (Anskin et al., 1972) provided the writer with an exciting tool for the exploration of self-concept within the students. The five filmstrips in "Learning About Me" presented the students with examples of some experiences with themselves and their environment, and they provided for the development of insights leading the students to enhance their own self-concepts. For each filmstrip, a series of discussion questions and role-playing activities were implemented to produce or reinforce awareness in the students' self-concepts.

Awards were used once or twice a day to announce success and to stimulate feelings of worth and self-esteem. The awards affirmed the students' sense of accomplishment and self-worth. The writer periodically gave paise and encouragement to all students in order to stimulate their feelings of worth and self-esteem. Progress reports (see Appendix I) were sent home which indicated students' strengths and weaknesses.

Evaluation was based on the individual child's own work. The writer administered the Post-Self-Concept Inventory (see Appendix A), Post-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills (see Appendix C), and Post-Inventory Skills Checklist (see Appendix D) at the end of the implementation period.

The writer did not experience any major difficulties in the implementation of this practicum although parent visitation could not be scheduled because of conflicts in the times designated. However, some parents were able to visit the classroom during American Education Week.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

This practicum was designed to help the writer's kindergarten students grow in all areas of development: physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. Special attention was given to help them: (a) develop belief in themselves and respect for others, (b) establish effective work habits, and (c) strengthen their desire to learn.

The students were very successful in relating to classroom activities in a positive manner. They followed simple directions and demonstrated development of muscular control and coordination. They expressed pride in completing activities, participated in dramatic play, and talked and listened to peers and adults. They enthusiastically sang songs and experimented with paints, crayons, clay, and other art media. Students were able to develop independence; they enhanced their motor skills, verbal interaction, and communication skills; and they mastered the skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum. They were very successful in relating to classroom activities in a positive manner through singing, cooking, manipulating objects, and role playing. During center time, in order to solve problems and attain social skills, students worked effectively with materials such as sand and water, beads, clay, pegboards and pegs, puzzles, games, toys, puppets, measuring tools, books,

dolls, and rhythm instruments. Awards were given periodically to announce success and to stimulate feelings of worth and self-esteem. The awards affirmed the students' sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Praise and encouragement were given to help them grow in confidence and to provide them with pride in building a basis for achievement.

Objective number 1 stated that students would grow emotionally and socially. This objective was measured by the Pre and Post-Self-Concept Inventory. Table 1 summarizes the pre and postresponses to this inventory.

Table 1

Results of Pre and Post-Self-Concept Inventory
(52 participants)

		Pre		Post	
		Percent		Percent	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Are you good at drawing?	10	90	100	0
2.	Do you like the way you look?	20	80	100	0
3.	Do your teachers like you?	25	75	100	0
4.	Do the girls like you?	5	95	100	0
5.	Do you do good work at school?	10	90	90	10
6.	Do you like school?	60	40	100	0
7.	Are you smart?	5	95	100	0
8.	Do the boys like you?	15	85	100	0
9.	Do you like yourself?	20	80	95	5
10.	Are you a good listener?	10	90	85	15

Objective number 1 was met--students grew emotionally and socially. They also maintained positive feelings or improved negative feelings they had toward themselves and others. Ninety percent of the students scored higher on 9 of the 10 items of the Post-Self-Concept Inventory.

Objective number 2 specified that the students would grow in their ability to communicate. The Pre and Post-Standards of Learning (SOL) Skills Checklist (see Appendix B) was used. It included three modes of assessment: (a) performance (oral or dramatic presentations), (b) observation activities, and (c) oral responses. To assess students' performance, the writer used the checklist for the periodic recording of the SOL. Table 2 summarizes the responses to this checklist.

The Pre-SOL Skills Checklist indicated that the students did not meet the standard for achievement based on 75% to 80% for assessment mastery. With some objectives, the focus was on a process--how the students went about learning. In the final analysis, the evaluation decision for each objective was "yes" or "no;" the writer made this judgment. The Post-SOL Skills Checklist was administered after the implementation period with positive results. Objective number 2 was met, and all of the students mastered the SOL based on 80% to 100% for assessment mastery.

Table 2

Results of Pre and Post-Standards of Learning Skills Checklist
(52 Participants)

	Pre		Post	
	Percent		Percent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Assume roles of both speaker and listener in informal conversation.	30	70	100	0
2. Develop listening and comprehension skills.	5	95	90	10
3. Develop the beginning motor skills essential for manipulating writing tools.	5	95	80	20
4. Participate in a variety of literary experiences.	25	75	100	0
5. Interact in a variety of activities that stimulate language growth.	10	90	100	0
6. Acquire experiences necesary to language development and thinking.	40	60	100	0
7. Demonstrate growth in visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic perception.	5	95	85	15
8. Repeat from memory brief selections such as rhymes, poetry, and songs.	10	90	90	10
9. Demonstrate growth of logical thinking.	20	80	95	5
10. Communicate ideas by dictating words, phrases, or sentences.	5	95	95	5

The students expressed perceptions, ideas, feelings, and concepts in creative ways. They answered questions about information read or told to them. They painted, pasted, folded, cut, engaged in finger plays, built with small blocks, and worked with puzzles. Students listened to nursery rhymes, fairy tales, poetry, and stories; they followed simple oral directions and talked and listened to adults.

Objective number 3 stated that students would grow physically. This objective was measured by the Pre and Post-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills (see Appendix C). Table 3 summarizes the responses to this checklist.

The Pre-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills indicated that approximately 50% of the skills were mastered by the students. They grew physically and demonstrated growth by identifying body parts and participating in physical activities such as games and rhythm. Appropriate manipulative activities were included to meet individual needs. The Post-Inventory of Fine and Gross Motor Skills was administered after the implementation period with positive results: 99% of the students mastered all of the skills.

Objective number 4 stated that students would grow aesthetically. The writer's judgment concerning the students' growth was based on her observations. The students enjoyed experimenting with paints, crayons, clay, and other art media. They increased awareness and appreciation of color, design, and rhythm; creative work was demonstrated. The writer helped

Table 3

Results of Pre and Post-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills *
(52 participants)

	Pre		Post	
	Percent		Percent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Student has trembling hand movements.	40	60	0	100
2. Student has rigid hand movements.	25	75	0	100
3. Student exhibits crowded or cramped writing.	85	15	30	70
4. Student exhibits laborious writing.	60	40	25	75
5. Student is generally awkward or clumsy and has difficulty keeping balance.	0	100	0	100
6. Student switches hands frequently to write or draw.	5	95	5	95
7. Student shows poor coordination in physical activities.	75	25	0	100
8. Student has difficulty holding or using pencil or crayon.	80	20	0	100
9. Student has difficulty cutting correctly.	60	40	20	80

* The writer scored the checklist by using students' performance and direct observations.

students explore new techniques, and they learned new ways to express themselves. They became aware of and were able to appreciate the contributions of other individuals.

Objective number 5 stated that students would grow intellectually. This objective was measured by the Pre and Post-Inventory Skills Checklist (see Appendix D). Table 4 summarizes the results of this inventory.

Table 4

Results of Pre and Post-Inventory Skills Checklist
(52 participants)

	Pre		Post	
	Percent		Percent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Color names	60	40	100	0
2. Number recognition, 1-10	20	80	100	0
3. Rote counting, 0-20	5	95	100	0
4. Names of shapes	60	40	100	0
5. Letter recognition	5	95	95	5
6. Directional terms	20	80	100	0
7. Visual discrimination of objects	10	90	100	0
8. Directions	20	80	100	0
9. Opposites	5	95	90	10

The writer observed that the students made progress on a daily basis. The Post-Checklist was administered after the implementation period with positive results. Objective number 5 was met, and all students mastered the majority of the skills.

In the writer's school, promotion or retention is based upon the total educational welfare of the student which includes physical, academic, social, and emotional factors. Greatest emphasis is placed on academic achievement as established by academic performance criteria and expectations. At the end of the 1987-88 school year, the writer had only three students who were retained. Through the use of learning centers and contracts, students had successful experiences in mastering skills associated with the kindergarten curriculum.

The writer's findings were as follows:

1. Centering activities help children to discover the wonders of themselves and to express who they are in the most creative ways possible (Hendricks, 1979).

2. Play activities are highly motivating to children (Vartuli & Rogers, 1985).

3. Children who receive praise for excellent performance in an activity demonstrate interest in that activity (Boggiango & Ruble, 1979).

4. The teacher is one of the most important contributors to student achievement and attitudes (Simpson, 1978).

5. Paper-and-pencil tasks are used to teach basic skills which could be taught through more appropireate, concrete activities and real experiences (Charlesworth & Miller, 1985).

6. Children learn better with hands-on activities than with worksheets.

7. Play encourages curiosity at all levels of development (Henniger, 1987).

Conclusions

Based on the results of the practicum, the following conclusions are presented:

1. Learning centers contribute greatly to motivate students to become more independent in the learning process.

2. Learning centers enhance children's learning by helping them to feel like worthwhile individuals who can do things on their own.

3. Experimenting, exploring, discovering, trying out, restructuring, speaking, and listening are all descriptors of a good kindergarten program.

4. As children solve problems, they make decisions and evaluate their effectiveness individually and with others.

5. Praise, recognition, and increased responsibility will help promote a positive self-concept.

6. There is a need for self-concept activities to be included in the curriculum to help students become better adjusted individuals.

Recommendations

Based on the practicum results and the writer's implementation of learning centers during the 1987-88 school year, one recommendation is that learning centers be expanded to first grade and be an integral part of the daily instructional program. A variety of concrete activities and experiences will help provide a stimulating school environment where learning may be enhanced. These materials and activities should be available so that children will be challenged according to their developmental levels.

The kindergarten program needs to have many more opportunities for individual, self-directed activities in addition to teacher-guided experiences and direct teaching. Learning centers should be implemented where children are free to explore individual interests and develop resourcefulness. More self-concept activities should continue to be a part of the kindergarten curriculum. Parents or volunteers could assist in the changing or expanding of the learning centers. Also, if students are to learn to read, write, and add, they need to be provided with time and opportunities to play.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum will be shared with other kindergarten teachers. The writer has compiled a scrapbook of awards, pictures, and activities and a learning resource box (teacher-made activities) which she used during the implementation period. These materials will be made available as an additional reference and will be expanded to include many different kinds of instructional materials which will help students gain knowledge and develop skills.

For a workshop in Africa, a local college professor used some of the writer's teacher-made learning center materials for demonstrations and displays.

Pictures of the students were taken by the newspaper and an article was written on Career Day (see Appendix J).

In September and October 1988, the writer will present her practicum to teachers in another school system. The practicum experience will be summarized in a paper that will be presented to a local professional organization.

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Appendix A

Pre and Post-Self-Concept Inventory

	Yes	No
1. Are you good at drawing?		
2. Do you like the way you look?		
3. Do your teachers like you?		
4. Do the girls like you?		
5. Do you do good work at school?		
6. Do you like school?		
7. Are you smart?		
8. Do the boys like you?		
9. Do you like yourself?		
10. Are you a good listener?		

Directions for Administration

The students will be questioned individually for their responses.

Scoring

The more affirmative answers indicated, a more positive self-image.

Appendix B

Pre and Post-Standards of Learning Skills Checklist

The kindergarten student:	Yes	No
1. assumes the role of both speaker and listener in informal conversation.		
2. develops listening and comprehension skills.		
3. develops the beginning motor skills essential for manipulating writing tools.		
4. participates in a variety of literary experiences.		
5. interacts in a variety of activities that stimulate language growth.		
6. acquires experiences necessary to language development and thinking.		
7. demonstrates growth in visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic perception.		
8. repeats from memory brief selections, such as rhymes, poetry, and songs.		
9. demonstrates growth of logical thinking.		
10. communicates ideas by dictating words, phrases, or sentences.		

Language arts standards of learning objectives with assessment strategies, K-6 (1985, revised). Hampton, VA: Hampton City Schools.

Appendix C

Pre and Post-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills

____ 1. Student has trembling hand movements.

____ 2. Student has rigid hand movements.

____ 3. Student exhibits crowded or cramped writing.

____ 4. Student exhibits laborious writing.

____ 5. Student is generally awkward or clumsy and has difficulty keeping balance.

____ 6. Student switches hands frequently to write or draw.

____ 7. Student shows poor coordination in physical activities.

____ 8. Student has difficulty holding or using pencil or crayon.

____ 9. Student has difficulty cutting correctly.

Fine and gross motor skills checklist (1982). Hampton, VA: Hampton City Schools.

Appendix D

Pre and Post-Inventory Skills Checklist

Name _____ Date _____

Mastery
Date

1. Color names

___ red ___ green ___ brown

___ blue ___ black ___ purple

___ yellow ___ orange ___ white

2. Number Recognition

___ 1 ___ 5 ___ 9

___ 2 ___ 6 ___ 10

___ 3 ___ 7

___ 4 ___ 8

3. Rote Counting 0 - _____

4. Names of Shapes

___ circle ___ square ___ rectangle

___ lines ___ triangle

5. Letter Recognition (names upper and lower case letters)

___A,a___ ___H,h___ ___O,o___ ___V,v___

___B,b___ ___I,i___ ___P,p___ ___W,w___

___C,c___ ___J,j___ ___Q,q___ ___X,x___

___D,d___ ___K,k___ ___R,r___ ___Y,y___

___E,e___ ___L,l___ ___S,s___ ___Z,z___

___F,f___ ___M,m___ ___T,t___

___G,g___ ___N,n___ ___U,u___

6. Directional Terms (demonstrates directionality skills)

up _____ in front of _____

down _____ between _____

over _____ stop _____

under _____ go _____

behind _____

7. Visual Discrimination of Objects (identify)

large _____

small _____

alike _____

different _____

8. Directions

draw a circle around _____ put an X _____

draw a line under _____

9. Opposites (identify)

large, small _____ open, closed _____

alike, different_____ near, far _____

up, down _____ in front of, behind _____

left, right _____ over, under _____

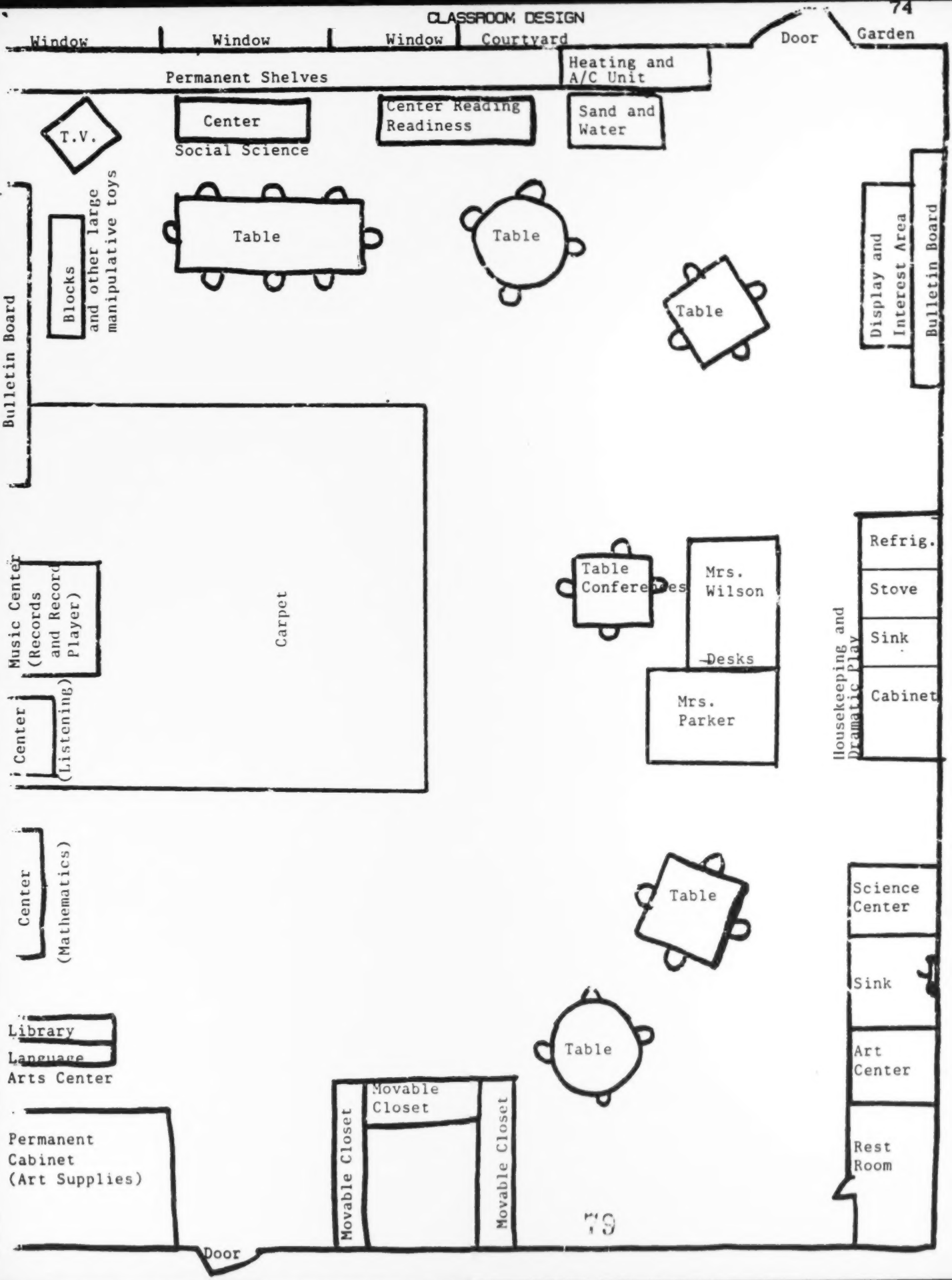
in, out _____ top, bottom _____

first, last _____

APPENDIX E

CLASSROOM DESIGN OF LEARNING CENTERS

CLASSROOM DESIGN



APPENDIX F

LEARNING CENTER CONTRACTS

MATHEMATICS

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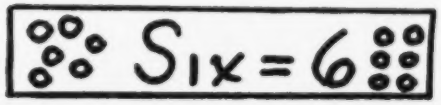

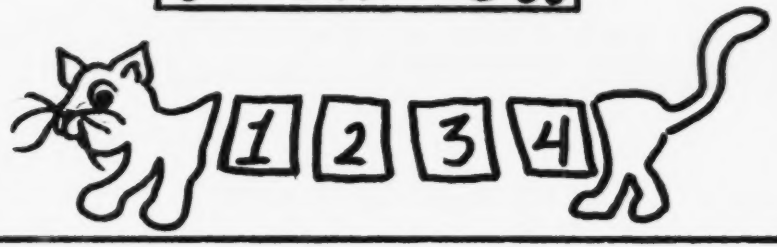

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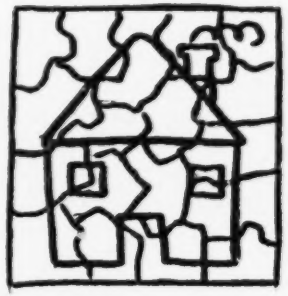
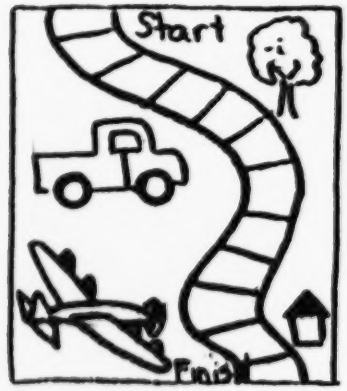


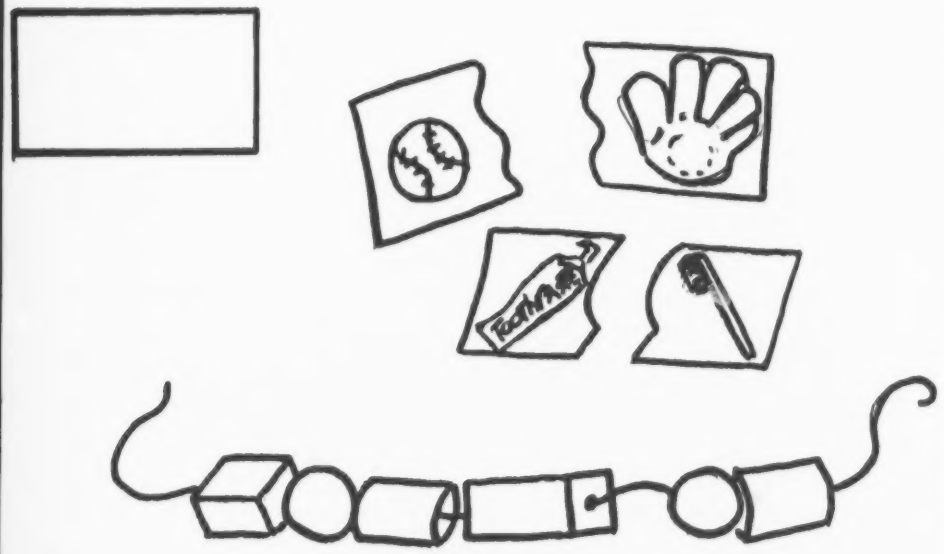


BLOCKS

CONFERENCE

MEET WITH:

GAMES



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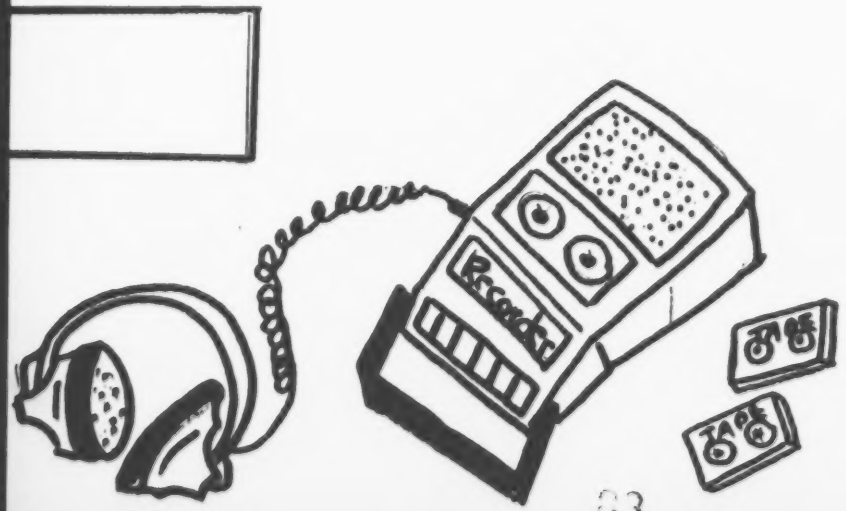
LISTENING



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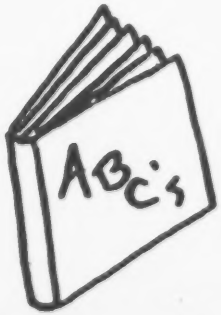

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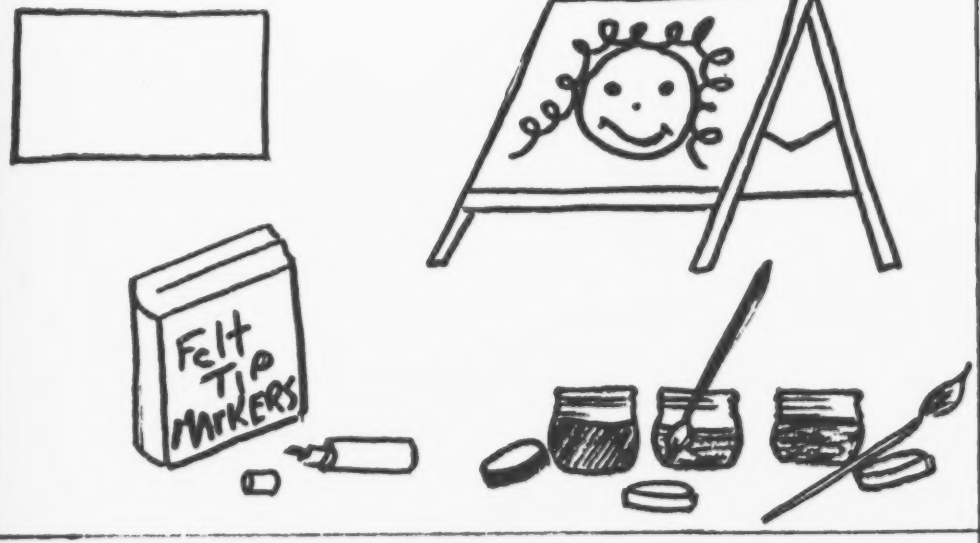

SCIENCE

LISTENING

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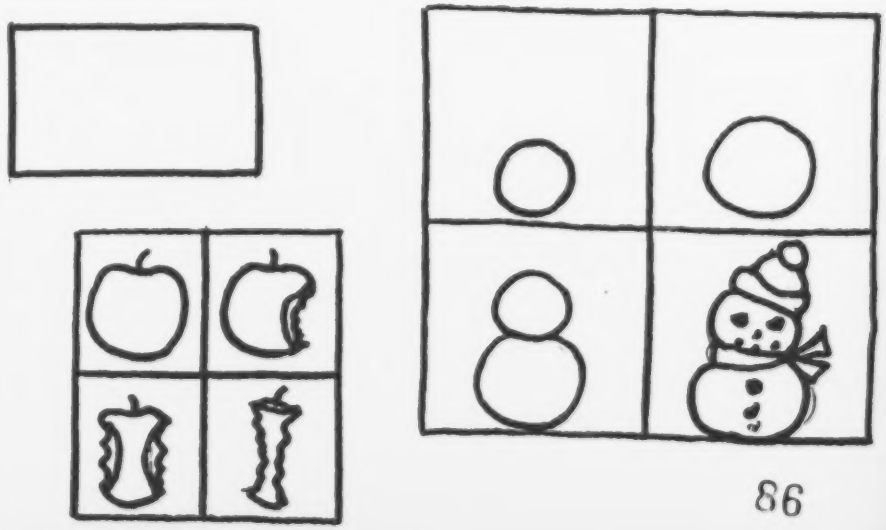
READING READINESS



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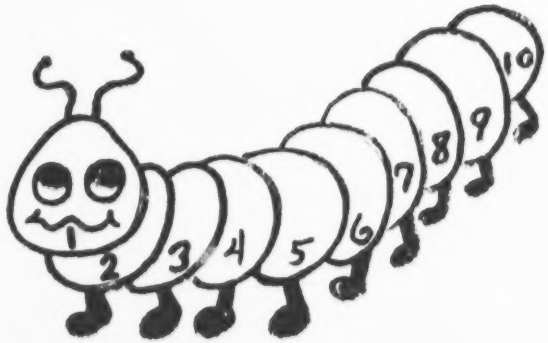
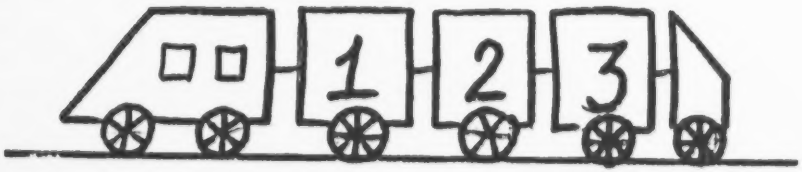
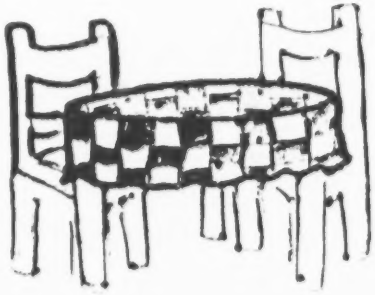
79

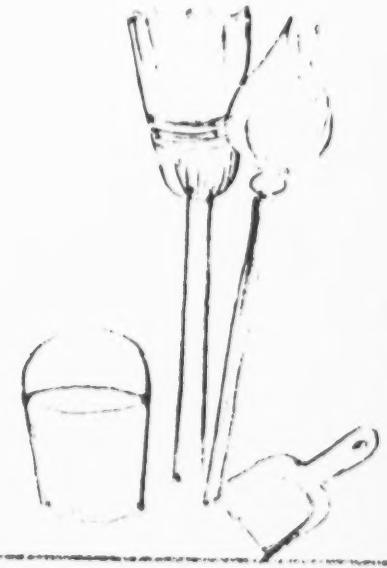
MATHEMATICS





HOUSEKEEPING AND
DRAMATIC PLAY





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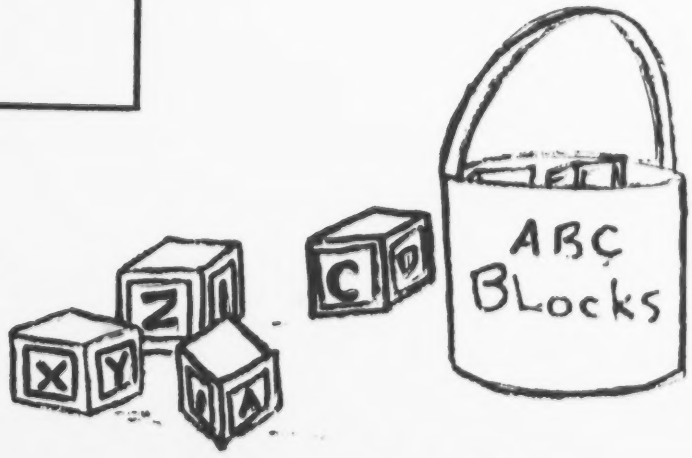

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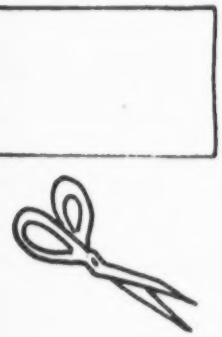
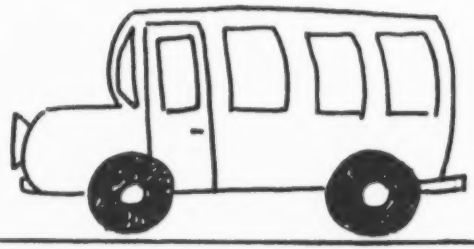
CONFERENCE

MEET WITH:

88

BUS DRIVER





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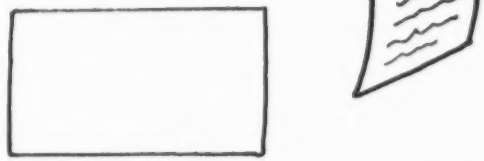
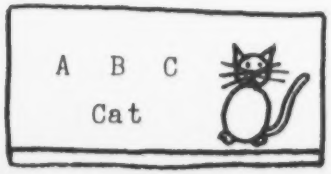
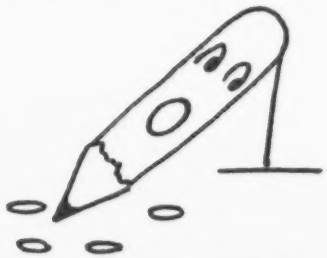
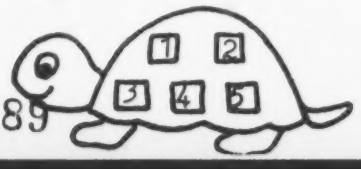


PRINCIPAL

TEACHER







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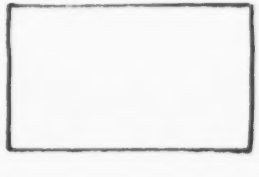

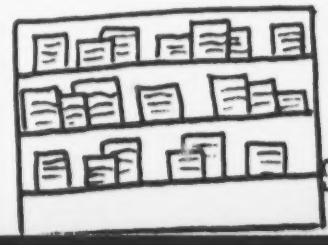

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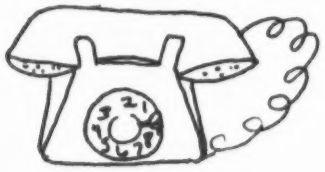
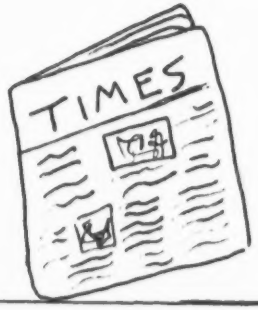
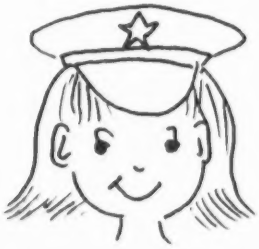
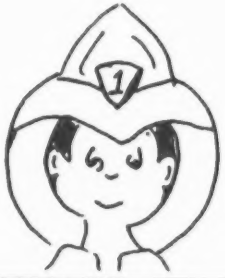




PUBLIC SERVICES





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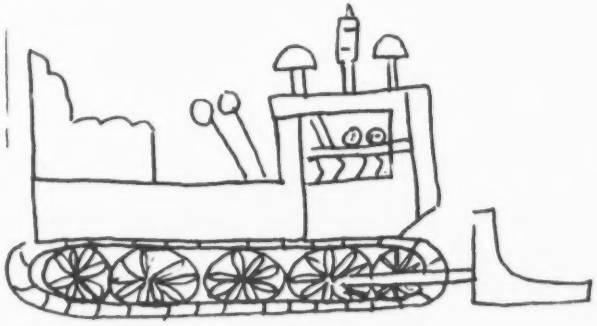
CONSTRUCTION



Appendix G
Schedule

Time	Involvement	Responses Anticipated
8:25-8:30 (11:55-12:00) Arrival	The writer greets children individually. Children care for personal effects.	Self-concept enhanced Sense of responsibility developed. Social interaction encouraged.
8:30-9:00 (12:00-12:30) Group Time	The writer leads group time. Children present special interests. The writer initiates focus for day. Children assist with plans for the day.	Self-concept enhanced Speaking and listening skills developed. Communication experienced. Vocabulary developed. Interests extended. New interests stimulated. Curiosity heightened.
9:00-9:50 (12:30-1:20) Activity Time	Children choose from a wide variety of learning experiences including dramatic and manipulative play, creative and science activities, mathematical games (learning centers).	Decision making and self-direction encouraged. Leadership practiced. Self-concept enhanced. Motor development increased. Social development increased. Creative expression fostered. Perceptual experiences enlarged. Concepts and skills developed in many content areas including communication, mathematics, reading readiness, science, and social studies.
9:50-10:00 (1:20-1:30) Clean up	Children replace materials and equipment used.	Responsibility assumed. Sense of pride in school.
10:00-10:30 (1:30-2:00) Physical Education	Children participate individually or in groups for physical education.	Physical body strengthened. Muscular coordination and control enhanced. Individual participation learned. Group participation learned Sense of balance developed.

10:30-10:45 (2:00-2:15) Snack	Children have snack together.	Health education and mathematical concepts expanded. Social graces realized.
10:45-11:45 (2:15-2:45) Literature	The writer reads or tells story and/or poems. The writer directs discussion, poses thought questions, and directs follow-up activities.	Literature enjoyed. Thinking extended. Realization established concerning value of printed page.
11:15-11:30 (2:45-3:00) Daily Evaluation	Children and the writer review and evaluate day's activities. Children relate experiences of the day, may dictate experience story. The writer gives personal good-bye to each child.	Experiences evaluated Appreciation for printed page enhanced Feeling toward self in relation to school and peers enhanced.

Note: Times in parentheses represent afternoon session hours.

Appendix G
Class News

In observance of Fire Prevention Week, students were visited by a firefighter. After a demonstration of the equipment used on the fire truck, he discussed the work that firefighters do.

The students welcomed visitors from the Virginia Living Museum. They enjoyed seeing, touching, and learning about animals.

The students constructed halloween art; they planned their halloween celebrations.

American Education Week:
Grandparents' Day: Students presented a program in the cafetorium.

Parents' Visitation: Parents were invited to visit the classroom.

Students learned about food, where it comes from, and the basic food groups. They prepared a Thanksgiving feast which was held in the classroom. Students had a tasting party which included foods from the four food groups.

A parent volunteer worked with the students in teaching them Spanish. They learned the days of the week, their names, how to count to 20, and several words and phrases.

Students had a unit of study on exploring with magnets.

Students learned about families and how family members share work that is done in the home.

Students learned about the five senses and feeling.

In observance of dental health week, students visited a dentist's office; highlights of the visit were shown on the local educational television station from Thursday, March 24 to Monday, March 28, 1988, at 4:00, 7:00, and 11:00 p.m.

Students welcomed a student observer from a local college.

Students had a unit of study on seasons and the weather. They had nature walks, adopted a class tree, and observed the changes in each season.

Students completed the Alpha Time Series (learning center activities) and became familiar with the special features of each letter person.

Students went on a nature walk to a local beach with the science curriculum specialist.

A local high school public speaking class presented several primary stories through oral interpretations.

Students worked on a unit of study entitled "Career Awareness." The activities were designed to help them develop an appreciation for various careers and their importance. Several community workers and leaders visited and talked to the students about their world of work.

Students culminated their unit of study on career awareness with a tour of the school administrative center. They visited the vocational assessment department, graphic arts, television media center, library, and the print shop. They dressed according to a career of their choice in the world of work. Pictures of the students were taken by the local newspaper and an article was written on Career Day.

Students planted their garden (outside) and observed how plants and seeds grow. In June, they picked their vegetables and made a salad.

Appendix H

Calendar Plan

1987	
July	Preparared outline and preliminary literature review
August	Received written review from adviser After approval of outline, prepared proposal Constructed teacher-made games and child-centered activities Conducted preliminary meetings with school principal and coworker Conducted kindergarten orientation for parents
September	Received written review from adviser Received proposal approval and permission to implement
October-June 1988	Implementation of practicum beginning with administration of: Pre-Self-Concept Inventory (see Appendix A) Pre-Inventory Checklist of Fine and Gross Motor Skills (see Appendix C) Pre-Inventory Skills Checklist (see Appendix D) Implementation of Learning Centers (8 months)
June and July	Phone conference(s) with adviser to discuss results Completion of Chapter V Preparation and submission of report Receive review from adviser
August	Submission of revisions and approval of report Distribution of abstract to cluster members

Appendix I

Progress Report

STUDENT'S NAME _____

DATE _____

Dear Parent(s),

This Progress Report is not be considered a formal report card. Its purpose is to indicate the areas where strengths and weaknesses are noticed at the present time.

Sincerely,

Mrs. A. B. Wilson,
Teacher

Please return the Progress Report. Thank you !

Parent(s)' comments:

Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix I

PROGRESS REPORT

NAME _____

Academic Development

Student can:

____ recognize and name colors

____ distinguish size differential

____ identify body parts

____ name the seven days of the week

____ identify shapes

____ do rote counting

____ recognize clocks, watches, and calendars as being used for measuring time

____ recognize scales and thermometers as measuring devices

____ identify letters of the alphabet

____ match numbers with the correct set (0-10)

Personal and Social Growth

Student:

____ works and plays well with others

____ listens when others speak

Work Habits

Student:

____ follows directions

____ works independently

Evaluation Code:
S = Satisfactory
I = Shows Improvement
N = Needs more time to develop
- = Skill not evaluated

Appendix I

Progress Report Comments from Parents

Mrs. W., I thank you for all your help with C. I will continue to work with her.

Thanks for everything. A. loves school.

P. does seem to be doing better with encouragement. Thank you!

I will work with M. in the areas he is weak in. He loves you and Mrs. P.

Thank you!

We are pleased with M's progress. We discussed his class participation grade with him. We will continue to encourage him in this area as all others. Thank you.

We appreciate all the help you have given M. this year and I'm glad to see that it is working. Thank you.

I am pleased to see him making the progress that he has done thus far. We will work with him on his classroom behavior.

Thanks to you, K. enjoys school very much.

I am pleased to see M. is improving. I am working with him.

Thank you for all your efforts; D. is enjoying your class. If we can help in any way, let us know.

I am very pleased with H.'s adjustment and enthusiasm to her kindergarten class.

O. speaks highly of you and is anxious to learn. Thanks.

Thank you for the feedback.

Thank you for doing a good job.

C. has come a long way. I will continue to work with her. Thank you.

A. likes her teacher and school. If we can help, let us know. We are trying to do our part, too. Good luck!

W. loves school.

Thank you for your attention to B.

Thank you for creating an atmosphere which makes S. look forward to school.

I am happy that he is improving.

I am pleased with E.'s progress.

C. enjoys school.

Thank you very much! I am very proud.

I am pleased with K.'s progress.

I am glad that L. is doing well and improving in various areas. I hope she continues enjoying and doing well in her activities.

Please keep up the good work, Mrs. W.

Pleased to see his improvements!

Thank you for the time and attention you're giving L.

G. enjoys kindergarten and having you as her teacher.

S. certainly is enjoying school.

Thank you for your efforts!

Thank you so much for working with C. so diligently.

Thank you for being such a caring teacher.

Thanks for all you've done!

Classroom notes

Early directions

Students in Addie Wilson's kindergarten class at Armstrong Fundamental School studied careers. At the end of the school year, they dressed according to the career of their choice for a tour of the Hampton School Administration Center. From left, Paul Barber helps fingerprint Chip Edwards while Michael Banks watches and Sarah Bee checks the blood pressure of her friend Cynthia Massengil.

Staff photos by RANSY MORR